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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that a human science approach should be included in the American Psychological Association's (APA) pending reconsideration of accreditation specifications. Psychology's curriculum will remain incomplete and sterile until it assimilates this approach. Some of the key procedures of human science research methodology are outlined, and their relevance and value are demonstrated in relation to APA curriculum. Human science methodology is designed to foster understanding of the intrinsic coherence or meaningfulness of psychological life as it is lived in ordinary experience, as contrasted with the natural science aim to formulate explanations--specifications of extrinsic cause-effect relations between variables. It is possible to conduct psychological research in such a way as to elucidate the meanings given in our immediate experience, yet psychology continues to be notoriously delinquent in this regard. Traditional psychology's preoccupation with abstractions as its content is structurally correlated to its methodology. Whereas the practice of science may, in its ideal form, aim to be value free, this prior choice of abstractions or concretions as the field within which to conduct one's inquiry is an intrinsically value laden choice. (LMO)

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THE QUESTION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

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THE QUESTION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Christopher M. Aanstoos

In order to focus my presentation specifically on the issue of research methodologies, there are several preliminary points concerning metapsychological issues that I will have to merely note, without being able to develop any extended analysis here. You may be sure that these points have been extensively analyzed, by myself and others. If you wish, we could take them up in more detail in the question period. For now, allow me to set up the body of my paper by simply specifying these seven preliminaries without elaboration.

First, contemporary mainstream psychology considers itself to have been founded as an independent discipline in the late nineteenth century. The establishment of Wundt's laboratory in 1879 in particular is taken to signify this founding.

Second, through its self-understanding of this founding, psychology conceives itself to be a science. In so doing, it asserts that scientific inquiry is the privileged mode of access to knowledge about psychological subject matter.

Third, psychology considers adherence to the scientific method of research to be the hallmark criterion by which it qualifies as a science. In other words, psychology maintains its belief in its scientific stature and the legitimacy of its findings by conducting its research according to the standards of the scientific method.

Fourth, these standards of the scientific method were not originarily devised by psychology. Rather, psychology appropriated them from the pre-existing natural sciences extant at the time of its nineteenh century founding.

Fifth, this pre-existing scientific method is fundamentally the

hypothetico-deductive method. It is characterized by the assumption that its subject matter consists of causally related variables. Its aim is to discover the particular causal relations involved through empirical investigative procedures.

Sixth, these procedures involve operational definitions, experimentation, and statistical measurement. They are designed to assure objective, valid, and reliable explanations of the effect of independent variables upon dependent variables.

Seventh, because of their key conceptual and methodological value to the discipline, facility with these procedures is required of those who seek to become psychologists. Those who would become clinicians, as well as those who would become researchers, must first demonstrate their mastery of this research methodology.

I hope that these seven points are sufficiently obvious that my bald assertion of them is not unduly controversial. One clarification some may insist upon concerns my assertion of the univocality of the scintific method. I'm thinking here of the distinction, drawn quite clealy by Cronbach (1957) between experimental research methods and correlational research methods. Indeed, for Cronbach, these constitute two distinct disciplines within scientific psychology. Relative to the fundamental cleavage I'll examine in this presentation, however, this distinction is comparatively insignificant. Both experimentalists and correlationists study hypothetical variables, which are operationally defined and statistically measured. It is that common, presupposed substructure that I want to critically refect upon.

To briefly preview the critique I'll develop, let me simply say at this juncture that I intend to argue against the value of the graduate training I just characterized in point seven. Although such training is the logical

culmination of the preceding six points, I will argue that it, and the points upon which it rests, pervert the development of an authentic psychology, and retard the development of authentic psychologists. I will argue for a radically different research methodology. And I will argue that graduate education should inlude this alternative at least as a complement to — if not a replacement of — the prevailing one.

I'll begin constructing my case by drawing a conclusion from the preliminary points I just mentioned. It is this: in psychology's eagerness to establish its scientific credentials, it committed a fundamental error by appropriating as its own the methodology of experimentation devised by the already established natural sciences. Let me take a moment to justify this conclusion. It must be recalled that the sciences of nature emerged in the post-Renaissance period, especially during the sixteenth century. In doing so, they crystalized a then developing alternative approach to knowledge of the natural world. It was an empirical approach, as contrasted with the then prevalent one based on authority -- either religious (the Church) or classical (Aristotle). What must be recognized about this advance was that natural science was developed as a path to knowledge about a certain regional ontology: the natural universe, conceived as a mathematical manifold of elements and forces. Because the natural world lent itself -- in an approximate way — to this conception, these sciences were able to demonstrate their efficacy by manipulating and controlling natural forces. By the mid-nineteenth century their progress engendered a metaphysic of scientism that swept through Western intellectual thought, and profoundly influenced the formative phase of the social sciences.

Psychology, infected with this contagion, rushed headlong to enframe itself within this viewpoint. Fechner mathematized, Wundt experimented, and Ebbinghaus purged all traces of meaning from the laboratory. And then came Pavlov and

Watson to reduce psychological life to reflexology. Through such means, psychology sought to establish itself as a science by doing unto psychological reality exactly what the natural sciences had done unto the universe of nature. That is, they conceived of it as a heap of causally related variables, whose causal relations could be determined through experimentation. It should be noted here that this scientistic transformation of psychology was not without its opposition. Contemporaneously with Wundt's experimental psychology, Brentano (1874/1973) called for a descriptive psychology. Dilthey (1894/1977) opposed Ebbinghaus's vision of psychology purged of meaning with one whose central task was the explication of the lived meaningfulness of human existence. Simultaneous with the behaviorists' reflexology, Husserl (1925/1977) delineated the possibility of a phenomenological psychology of intentive consciousness and experience. Parallel tracks were available for psychology during its first few decades. But so thoroughly has mainstream psychology followed the one that even the historical existence of the other is rarely acknowledged, much less presented as an alternative.

But so what? Should a discipline give equal time to all the sundry alternatives that were proposed at various times throughout its history? Isn't its rejection of them a sign of its evolutionary progress? For the natural sciences, we might be somewhat sympathetic with these assertions. But we must be suspicious concerning their applicability to the case of psychology. For they presume that there has been such a linear progression of incremental knowledge, from basic fundamentals on up. Yet in psychology's case, that presumption must be greeted quite critically. Oh, certainly one could point to the increase in doctoral degrees, in APA membership, in recognition, and in stature. But has scientific psychology achieved the sort of foundational and cumulative progress in comprehending psychological reality that could justify the continued narrowness of its methodological base? I think not. Whatever

real progress has occurred has taken place despite rather than because of its methodological dogmatism. Indeed, as we now witness the complete dismantling of the behaviorist ediface that for so long dominated psychology, we should exercise extreme caution in asserting the resiliancy of any "laws" that orthodox scientific psychology proferred. Of course, now we're told by their successors, the cognitivists, that the pigeons were really processing information while they were pecking their disks. I suspect this shiny, new and improved, computerized version of psychology is merely recapitulating the same fundamental fallacy as its now bankrupt predecessor. Its continued slavish imitation of natural science leaves unquestioned the basic presumption that psychological reality should be researched by the same methodology as the universe of matter.

Ironically, psychology's continued adherence to this presupposition actually violates the most basic principle of science. The fundamental starting point of all science is that the scientist must not presume to know in advance the nature of her subject matter. Such preconceptions constrain scientific research, and so the scientist must ceaselessly uncover and set aside such constraints. In other words, as Giorgi (1970) has noted, the fundamental dictum of all science is fidelity to the phenomenon. But it order to be optimally faithful to the phenomenon, scientists must be ever vigilant not to foreclose its explication by presupposing that it too can best be studied by a methodology designed for another, quite different, subject matter. Rather, methodologies must be devised originarily, in dialogue with each particular regional ontology. That openness to allowing one's investigation to be guided by the phenomenon itself is what William James meant by "radical empiricism" or what Husserl meant by his maxim to go "to the things themselves." It is that course that mainstream psychology has failed to follow, or indeed even to chart.

Fortunately, there has always been an undercurrent, a counter-tradition within psychology that has nurtured this possibility. Though its strength has

waxed and waned, it has succeeded in advancing an alternative methodology for psychological research. Brentano, Dilthey, and Husserl proposed this alternative during psychology's first few decades. In the time since, it has been developed by others who recognized the need for methodological rigor in the conduct of research, yet were unwilling to contort psychology to fit the Procrustean bed of natural science. The past twenty years has seen an accelerating coalescence of this approach, which has come to be known as "human science" psychology. I believe it represents the maturation of the youthful rebellion of humanistic psychology, now deepened by its philosophical inheritance of existential, dialogal, and hermeneutical phenomenology. In this form, such an approach has begun a systematic and rigorous study of real, human experiencing of real, human meaning in the real, human world. As such, it promises a synthesis, a middle ground between the dehumanized natural science tradition in psychology on the one hand, and the antithetical abandonment of rigorous inquiry and comprehension of the other. It is more decisive than any mere application of orthodox natural scientific methodology to traditionally neglected content areas of interest to humanists. The experimental biopsychology of pheromones as a cause of love, after all, does not get us any closer to understanding the experience of love than the experimental biopsychology of conditioned salivary reflexes helped us to understand the experience of learning. The issue is more fundamental than simply addressing neglected content areas. It involves the deeper question of harmonizing method and content.

There are commentators -- on both sides -- who argue that this synthesis of human and science is impossible in principle. Certainly, C. P. Snow's (1959) analysis of the incommensurability of the "two cultures" -- the humanistic and the scientific -- has been appropriated by psychologists (e.g., Kimble, 1984) as a way to dismiss this possibility. Such dismissals do reflect the historical

schism between the two (as well reviewed by Fischer, 1977), but only because science has been defined by psychology along lines appropriated from the natural sciences. Hence, while the split is a historical fact, there is no essential reason why it must continue to be so. Indeed, it is no longer so even factually. In light of the developing human science alternative, dismissals of its possibility now may reflect simple ignorance of current developments, or may be motivated by a desire to preserve the status quo in psychology. Regardless, the best response it to point to the growing fait accompli of a human science psychology (e.g., Aanstoos, 1985).

Limiting ourselves here only to the question of methodology, we may still discern the promise and vitality of this emerging alternative by surveying new books, journals, institutes, and conferences connected with it. Among new publications, I consider the four volumes of the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (Giorgi, Fischer, & Von Eckartsberg, 1971; Giorgi, Fischer, & Murray, 1975; Giorgi, Knowles, & Smith, 1979; Giorgi, Barton, & Maes, 1983) excellent collections of human science research studies. Three other new anthologies include Exploring the Lived World (Aanstoos, 1984), Phenomenology and Psychological Research, (Giorgi, 1985), and Qualitative Research in Psychology (deKoning, Giorgi, & Ashworth, 1985). Other recent books, such as those by Fischer (1985) and by deKoning and Jenner (1982) have shown the relevance of these findings for clinical psyhology. Still others, especially those by Polkinghone (1983), Pollio (1982), Keen (1975), and Valle and King (1978) have provided systematic introductory texts which illuminate the fecundity of this approach. If we turn to journals, we also find many new titles, including Phenomenology and Pedagogy, Imaginal Psychology, the Journal of Metaphor and Symbolic Activity, Practice, Methods, Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, and The Humanistic Psychologist as additions to such comparatively old standbys as the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Human

Studies, and the Journal of Phenomenological Psychology. Likewise, the formation of human science research institutes at West Georgia College and at Saybrook Institute exemplify this trend. Lastly, so does the appearance of two new international conferences. The Human Science Research Conference, a primarily North American group, has been meeting annually since 1981, and publishes an annual Proceedings and a biannual newsletter. In addition, the Symposium for Qualitative Research in Psychology has met every other year in Europe since 1983, and publishes a volume of selected papers from each conference (deKoning, Giorgi, & Ashworth, 1985; van Zuuren, Mook, & Wertz, in press).

The point of this brief literature review is to demonstrate the fallacy of the argument that a human science psychology cannot in principle come into being. It is happening at this very moment, and those who dismiss the possibility are simply not being very observant. It would be more productive instead to focus the argument on the most efficacious relations between a human science approach and the natural science tradition. This issue is especially timely in light of APA's mounting concern for specifying an appropriate curriculum for graduate education in psychology. Such a circumscription will not only specify what is to be included, but also, by implication, what is to be excluded. Given traditional psychology's historical neglect of the human science alternative, it is quite likely that this approach will continue to be overlooked in APA's pending reconsideration of accredidation specifications. We believe that would perpetuate — and indeed institutionalize — one of psychology's most consequential mistakes. In organizing this symposium as we have, we would like to argue that a human science approach should be included in these specifications. Put strongly, our position is that psychology's curriculum will remain incomplete and sterile until it does assimilate this approach.

In the time I have remaining, I'd like to outline and exemplify some of the key procedures of human science research methodology, and in so doing to demonstrate their relevance and value to whatever curriculum APA may specify. I'll draw upon key articles by Giorgi (1975a, 1975b, 1983, 1985), Kvale (1983), and Wertz (1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1985) that have helped clarify the concrete procedures employed in human scientific research. Of course, I cannot be exhaustive in such a short presentation, and I do not intend to try. Rather, I'll mention some methodological innovations as illustrative, rather than comprehensive, of human science.

Its methodology is designed to foster understanding of the intrinsic coherence or meaningfulness of psychological life as it is lived in our ordinary experience. We may contrast this goal with the natural science aim to formulate explanations — specifications of extrinsic cause-effect relations between variables. In that way, explanations substitute for, and conceal, a lack of understanding of what is being explained. Psychologists have tried to explain why something is — for example, intelligence — without first understanding what it is. In seeking the prior ground of understanding, human science methodology eschews the path of hypothetical explanation, and its attendent accoutrements of operationism and measurement. Instead, its proceeds descriptively. Its mode is qualitative rather than quantitative. Understanding is achieved when the implicit coherence of the lived through meaning of the psychological event has been made explicit through its elaboration in a structural description that embraces and illuminates what was psychologically relevant to the person's experience. The attainment of such a description is the final step of human science research, but it is made possible by two preceding steps.

In the first of these, the researcher becomes attuned to the appearance of the phenomenon by attending to situations in which it is experienced. Most

typically, access to these events is gleaned through naive descriptions provided by subjects who've experienced them. In order to examine these experiences as they were lived, the researcher suspends the natural attitude — the tendency to take the given as if it were an objectivity independent of the one to whom it is given. This suspension is not a denial or refutation of its objectivated reality, but rather a bracketing of one's concern about its reality status, in order to become fully interested in its significance for the one who lives it. For example, in researching people's devotion to their pets, we would not be concerned about the pet as an objective entity, but rather about the pet as it appears, and what it means, to its owner. In other words, we shift our interest from objects to their lived meanings — to their immediate, prereflective sense prior to conceptual objectifications or abstractions. This step requires an "empathic immersion" (Wertz, 1983a) in the world of the subject. Words such as "wonder," "awe," and "appreciation" best capture the requisite attitude of the researcher at this step.

As the researcher opens herself to the subject's lived experience, that prereflective world becomes accessible to reflection. The reflective discernment and explication of that world is, then, the second step of human science research. Here, the researcher's task is to proceed intuitively, rather than inferentially — to stay with the subject's experience in order to penetrate its essential meaning rather than breaking off that interrogation by leaving the description for a construction. As van den Berg has noted, the descriptive researcher does not need hypotheses. The emergence of a hypothesis indicates that the description of psychological reality has been discontinued too soon. Wertz (1983a, 1983b) has carefully thematized the specific operative procedures with which the researcher arrives at an intuitive grasp of the essential meanings of the subject's experience. He details the explicative process by demonstrating the ways researchers detect relations, and make

distinctions, grasp recurring themes, and employ imagined variations.

The findings of this second step are then integrated to form a properly psychological description of the essential structural coherence of the experience's constitutive meanings.

A growing body of important results amply testify to the fecundity of this research methodology. It has contributed findings relevant to the psychology of learning, perception, and thinking, but also to anxiety, jealousy, and forgiveness, to mention only a few examples. For that reason alone, it merits a place within APA approved graduate curriculums. But, in addition, I believe it also meets -- in an essential way — the key criteria required by psychology of its research. First, this methodology is empirically data based, rather than introspectionistic. Human science research typically utilizes descriptions by naive subjects of their ordinary experience in the everyday world. Second, its findings can be either ideographic or nomothetic. It is not limited to analyses of individual cases. Though it begins there, human science research procedures can also expliate the general meaning structures that are invariant across individual cases, and essential to the experience of that phenomenon. Third, its findings are open to intersubjective verification by the research community. Because the researcher's insights are rigorously grounded in the naive descriptions by her subjects of their experience, others are welcome to examine, circumscribe, and revise the trajectory of the researcher's explicitation of that experience.

To summarize: it is possible to conduct psychological research in such a way as to elucidate the meanings given in our immediate experience. Yet psychology continues to be notoriously delinquent in this regard. Rather than explicating the meaningfulness given at the heart of psychological life, natural science psychology explains away meanings as illusory artefacts of hypothetical underlying mechanisms. But to deny the relevance of meaning to the psychology

of human being is to forget what is lived. This forgetfulness results in losing oneself in the study of abstractions, of conceptions that were not conceived through intercourse with the lived, but derived only after all contact with the lived was exorcized as thoroughly as possible. Nonsense syllables were substituted for memorable events, dots on a stationary computer screen were substituted for perceptions in the ambiant world. This exorcism is the fundamental aim of experimental methodology, and simultaneously its fundamental incarceration.

Traditional psychology's preoccupation with abstractions as its contents is structurally correlated to its methodology. The abstract concepts devoid of any lived through meaning on the content side are matched on the method side by such methodological abstractions as the use of laboratory animals that have been specially bred for generations to docilely submit to confinement in a laboratory bearing no resemblance whatsoever to their natural habitat. Content and method are both constitutive of the discipline's approach — or orientation — to psychological reality. Psychology's choice of methodology was not only a culturally significant decision to align itself with natural science. Psychology also thereby chose to turn away from the life world as its field of inquiry, as that which its project was to manifest. Whereas the practice of science may, in its ideal form, aim to be value free, this prior choice of abstractions or concretions as the field within which to conduct one's inquiry is an intrinsically value laden choice. It is the choice of what one will value highly enough to devote one's professional life to. Is human existence to be valued on its own terms, or is it to be valued only as it can be rendered an object? Shall we study the person or the reflex? This question has certainly been raised enough times, but the very fact of its being repeatedly posed indicates that it has yet to be answered in terms of the person. Of course, the reflexologists would argue that by studying reflexes they are actually studying

persons. But this appears so only because they've already defined the person as the end result of a causal matrix of hypothetical reflexes. I don't intend here to debate behaviorism, but only to show the structural connectedness of method and content.

The next step in our symposium, then, will be our proposal for a revisioning of how psychology conceptualizes its contents. And for that, I'll turn the podium over to my colleague, Bill Roll.

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